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ABSTRACT

This document reviews the consequences of urban community involvement in school decision making. Areas concerning educational decisions, shared as goals by lay communities and school people, are considered to be: institutional responsiveness, affective and material community support to schools, educational achievement, and the democratic principle (said to express the norm in this society that people affected by public institutions should participate in their governance). Four paths through which involvement may affect educational achievement (believed to be the most important shared goal) are cited: existing evidence to support the paths of parent self-efficacy; institutional/child congruence; community support; and, student self-efficacy. Speculations about needed additional research are also made. (Author/AM)

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Ten Years of Decentralization

A Review of the Involvement of Urban Communities in School Decision-Making

by Dale Mann

Introduction

One of the most highly touted, hotly contested, and poorly defined techniques for urban school improvement in our recent past has been that of community involvement. Increasing community involvement in educational decisions was supposed to lead directly to a large number of sometimes contradictory goals.

For some, involvement was to be used for the material gain of citizens, as in the "job strategy" which Sherry Arnstein suggests was one of the chief goals for citizen participation in Office of Economic Opportunity programs.[1] Edmund M. Burke suggested that involvement was supposed to give citizens "educational therapy" and to encourage "behavioral change."[2] Other authors believed that increasing participation would "relieve psychic suffering"[3] and develop "community cohesion."[4] Radical critics suggested that the purpose of increasing client involvement was to shift responsibility for the failure of urban schools to the poor ("blaming the victim") who might then be abandoned even more completely. Even moderate critics recognized that increased involvement was often used to co-opt or placate dissidents[5] and defuse legitimate disagreements.

Except at a grand rhetorical level, there never was much agreement about community involvement. Most school people were as threatened by it as social planners were mesmerized by it, at least in theory. Still, there are goals or purposes for involvement which both citizens and educators might share. In political situations, the discovery (or creation) of common interests can sometimes facilitate social progress. This article reviews the evidence about the impact of community involvement in education decisions in four areas where lay communities and school people may have very similar goals.

There are four possible goals of increasing community involvement which may be shared by communities and administrators. The first goal—improving the *responsiveness* of urban schools to their community clientele—is intended to increase the congruence between what schools do and what their urban clientele want them to do or need them to do. The second goal is that of increasing the affective and material *support* which communities give to schools. The third goal, *educational achievement*, is widely regarded as the most important. The achievement levels of urban schools are a source of profound dissatisfaction. A hope for community involvement has been that it would increase such levels. A fourth goal, *democratic principle*, expresses the norm in this society that people affected by public institutions should participate in their governance.

The empirical content of studies relating community involvement to goal achievement varies wildly from nil through

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thoroughly valid and reliable. Unfortunately, there is not as much of the latter as we might wish. Where good, non-school based studies disclose important facets of phenomena that are reasonably linked to schooling, we have not hesitated to make use of such tangential evidence. Where, as often happens, the only evidence available is anecdotal, we have considered the source along with the contributions which personal opinion based upon experience and conjecture may make to an important topic. The procedure strains the limits of inference but can be justified since the guidance which it yields may be better than unrefined speculation for people who cannot afford the luxury of inaction.

It is important to keep in mind that the major focus here is on the involvement of persons in decision-making, not the involvement of persons in parenting. The demonstrated association between high quality of parenting involvement and high levels of student achievement was often used to justify increased general involvement by parents and others in school decision-making. But the two situations are not comparable—not all community members are parents, the school's enrollment is more than an individual child, the school's responsibility is more limited than the parent's, the school is not the home, policy decisions are not only personal decisions, and decisional participation is therefore not equivalent to parental participation. Although parent training strategies will be reviewed insofar as they contribute to decision-making, the focus of this review is on the consequences of having involved people in decisions.

Goal I: Institutional Responsiveness

It is easy to see why the residents of a community should want schools to be responsive to them, but less obvious that school people should believe in the same goal. Under democratic principles, it is "right" for public schools to be responsive to the communities they serve. Practically all school people will endorse that symbolic goal, but the reality of its achievement is more problematic. With limited resources to fulfill an enormous number of needs, school people are inevitably the subject of uncomfortable pressures. When the disparities in the knowledge base and legal responsibility between the two groups are considered, exclusion of lay participation in quasi-technical decisions may be further justified. The bureaucratic walls around schools were erected for that purpose. Why then should school people want to be responsive to what they consider virtually insatiable, potentially less-informed, and legally non-accountable communities? Why should administrators want "their" schools to be responsive to communities? The big carrot in eliciting responsiveness from administrators is the support of their clientele. But that support is no longer freely given. It is exchanged for something.

Responsiveness is the price schools pay for community support. The responsiveness-support *quid pro quo* is the first reason that educators should share this goal. The second has to do with improvement. The importance of responsiveness is inversely proportional to the quality of schooling. Where the community is satisfied, responsiveness may be less important than where the community is dissatisfied with the quality of schooling. Improving schools has been an arduous business due to insufficient knowledge about the causes of good teaching and learning, the complexity of the educational task and the paucity of material resources, and such features as bureaucratic inertia, vested interests, and so on. Thus, it is difficult for schools to respond to community demands—especially when those demands come from new groups—when the changes involved are substantial and professional educators often do not agree with what is being asked. In those cases, the impetus for improvement must often come from outside the school. Averch, *et al*, found, "Research suggests that the larger the school system, the less likely it is to display innovation, responsiveness, and adaptation and the more likely it is to depend upon exogenous shocks to the system."[5] Since the outside community can be an important assist to school improvement, and since that improvement may lead to increased support, educators inclined to reform may well be interested in responding to their communities.

But that presupposes something to which to respond. The community must present its interests and demands. The content of what is learned, the process through which it is taught and the identities of the people who do the teaching, among other similar factors, are often of considerable concern to neighborhoods. As the neighborhood presence grows in terms of numbers, time, and scope of involvement, the likelihood increases that its demands will be presented and their resolution pursued in ways that ensure greater congruity between school and community. That process works in both directions. The more professionals and lay people interact, the more opportunities professionals have to persuade lay people of the wisdom of professionally-recommended policy. In the first instance, the school changes in response to the citizens; in the second, the citizens' own goals come to coincide with those of the institution.

The evidence which most clearly relates increases in community involvement to increases in the responsiveness of social welfare institutions (including schools) is the work of Robert Yin, *et al*. In their study of citizen participation in the govern-

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The Institute for Urban and Minority Education is an agency for human resource development and school organization improvement in the nation's cities. Founded in 1973, the Institute is jointly sponsored by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, and Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York.

ance of local social-welfare programs, Yin, *et al.* reported that about half of the citizen involvement mechanisms which had only "advisory" or limited authority over their programs succeeded in getting agency implementation of new ideas. Yet 69% of those citizen boards with "governing" authority got their agencies to accept new ideas.[6]

The most easily visible proxy for responsiveness is innovation.* Marilyn Gittell and T. Edward Hollander studied the propensity to innovate in six large cities. They argued that because of the changing socio-economic characteristics, the ability of those cities' school systems to adapt themselves to new demands was their single most important characteristic. They studied the effect of (1) administrative organization, (2) citizen participation, and (3) the allocation of financial resources on the propensity to innovate. They found that *"the most direct and clear cut cause and effect relationship with innovation appears to be public participation."*

> The only apparent difference in any of the several conditions of functions among the cities was in [citizen participation]. The Detroit school system is a more open participatory system encouraging wider public participation than any of the other systems. More alternative choices are presented for policy-making because of the proliferation of influence wielders and reactors and supporters. This circumstance can explain the greater flexibility and innovativeness of the Detroit school system.[7]

Similarly, Marian Sherman Stearns and Susan Peterson note:

> Evidence from Follow Through case studies conducted between 1968 and 1970 suggested a connection between the level of parent participation in a local project and the level of institutional change within the project and the community.[8]

In a study of 168 school administrators, Mann found responsiveness by individual school administrators to be clearly related to the degree of organized community involvement. In communities and neighborhoods lacking education-related interest groups, 87% of the school administrators were quite willing to substitute their own preferences for those of the community. Where PTAs existed, 69% of the administrators eschewed responsiveness, and where, in addition to the PTA, there were independent interest groups working on educational problems, only 55% of the administrators were willing to attempt to override the expressed preferences of the public.[9] *Thus, the number and kinds of organizations present in a community affect the responsiveness of local school administrators.*

A related finding appears in James Vanecko's study of community-action programs in 100 cities. Where the programs stressed the provision of services to clientele, there was very little change in the service-providing institutions themselves. In programs that emphasized community organization and citizen mobilization, the institutions themselves changed and became more responsive. Vanecko found that the simple presence of a school-related community organization was often sufficient to provoke change in the schools. Compared to other kinds of social welfare organizations, Vanecko found that

> Schools are less susceptible to the threat of militant activity and the pressures of citizens. They are most likely to change simply because the neighborhood is organized.[10]

It is not surprising that participation in community organizations should be associated with institutional responsiveness; people get involved exactly because they want to make a difference in what schools do. The premium which organization yields in political influence applies in school affairs just as certainly as it does in other areas. Since lay people bring new perceptions and new attitudes, response from the school is a logical outcome. Gittell notes the eagerness that newly elected community school board members brought to their responsibilities in New York. "There is no question but that boards and their professional staffs in the districts sought new methods which would produce immediate results," she says.[11]

Goal II: Support for Schooling

There is a lot of rhetoric about the plight of urban schools and the presumed culpability of administrators for that condition. These indictments have helped call attention to needed reforms, mobilized communities, and sensitized administrators. But no single group bears total responsibility for what hasn't been done in urban education. If professionals are believed to have bad intentions and the failures of urban education are their fault, then it is an easy step to believing that the schools run by those administrators do not deserve the support of the community. Yet, the momentum built up in an attempt to mobilize people's concern for the schools can damage the very institution it was intended to help. Two questions arise: is increasing support for the schools a goal which can be shared by communities and administrators; and, can support be built by increasing community involvement?

Supporting the schools as an institution does not mean endorsing every feature or consequence of the *status quo*. Nor does it mean that support cannot be conditional on important changes. What support means as a goal for community involvement is that the local school is an object generally worthy of cooperation, assistance, and reinforcement. Schools need acquiescence to survive. They need support to succeed. Thus, both communities and administrators may share an interest in seeing schools become stronger, more effective places for teaching and learning.

Can support be generated through involvement? Ronald Havelock made an extensive survey of the literature on educational innovation, including the work of Kurt Lewin and his associates. Havelock has summarized the effects which lead those who have been involved in a group to become more supportive of the group's decisions.

> . . . Group atmosphere has certain important effects in and of itself. Anderson and McGuire demonstrate the lowered

*Schools are also responsive where communities do not want change, and schools accomodate that desire. But there is considerable evidence about discontent, especially in the big cities, with school performance, so the cases of a *status quo* school reflecting a *status quo* community are probably much less frequent than administrators would have people believe.

resistance that results from peer support. The greater the peer support the lower the resistance and therefore the greater the susceptibility to influence from sources acceptable to the group. . . Thus, participation with others in decision-making groups usually leads to a commitment to the group's actions.[12]

Havelock also discusses Edith Bennett Pelz's validation of Lewin's early studies on the efficacy of group participation as a way of influencing individual behavior. Havelock notes that the two factors most closely related to an individual's acceptance of a new behavior were "(1) the perceived consensus among their peers and (2) the fact that they had made a decision."[13]

For the individual, the act of involvement requires the expenditure of some minimum amount of resources—time, concentration, intellectual and emotional expression. Investing personal resources is likely to increase one's commitment to the group—regardless of the outcome of any particular decision—since most people are loath to invest resources without receiving benefits in return. If they do make the effort to participate and nothing happens, they feel that their effort was wasted. Thus, people tend to re-interpret unfavorable decisions as favorable or at least neutral rather than have to acknowledge the unpleasant outcomes of their own involvement. As involvement increases so does support for the institution which was, after all, "good enough" to have made use of the involved person.

But how can that initial participation be stimulated? Political participation is related to an individual's sense of efficacy. A person who places high value on himself is more likely to believe that an institution will be responsive to his inputs and is thus more likely to make such a contribution. When the institution does respond, or even seems to respond, the person's estimate of both his own worth and the institution's is reinforced. This makes further inputs more likely. The cycle of self-efficacy contributing to political efficacy contributing to self-efficacy is probably more common, more powerful, and more socially significant in the direction of negative reinforcement than it is in positive directions. Lester Milbrath has said of those people who habitually do not take part in public affairs, "Failure to participate contributed to . . . [a] sense of political impotence and [the] lack of a sense of efficacy increases the probability that they will not participate."[14] The most likely question for urban educators is this: how can the downward spiral of self-efficacy be reversed? How can people be involved in participatory experience sufficient to increase their sense of political self-efficacy and hence their potential identification with and support for the institutions which provide such involvement?

However it begins, once involvement is under way other people identify the involved person with the school. They call on that person to explain or justify the school's actions, and the identification increases the felt commitment. Where poor school/community relations are a product of a lack of knowledge and familiarity, broadening the base of community participation in institutional decisions may decrease hostility and increase support. A participant will become more familiar with the setting. Simply by virtue of the act of participation, the individual has become more accessible and perhaps more amenable to influence than individuals who do not participate. As we have said, involvement in the school exposes community members, all of whom are much more likely to support the school than are people who are uninvolved. Thus, at a personal psychological level, the involvement of individuals may aggregate to community support because participation is likely to change an individual's relation to the school.

Frederick C. Mosher has summarized these effects:

> Participation in decision-making within a group or larger organization increases one's identification and involvement with the group and the organization; it also identifies him affectively with the decision itself and motivates him to change his behavior and to make the decision successful; it contributes to his motivation toward the accomplishment of organizational or group goals—i.e., it helps fuse group and organizational goals with individual goals; it contributes to morale in general, and this usually contributes to more effective performance on the job—i.e., higher productivity. . . Participative practices contribute to the "self-actualization" of the individual in the work situation and to the lessening of the differentials in power and status in a hierarchy.[15]

Perhaps the clearest example of these effects in urban education has been the experience of community-based paraprofessionals, many of whom have moderated their non-support of the schools precisely for these reasons. From the school's point of view, cooperation has been gained; from the radical point of view, there has been co-optation. For whatever motive or reason, the amount of support available to the schools has increased.

Richard Andrews and Ernest Noack in their paper on "The Satisfaction of Parents with Their Community Schools" cite the work of Hess and Shipman, and Rankin, confirming that "the participation of parents in various facets of the school's operation was found to improve the parent's attitude . . ."[16] Gittel's evaluation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experience indicated that the community's support for its schools increased during the first years of the community control experiment. In two surveys taken a year apart, support for the teachers more than doubled from 38% to 77%.[17] Support for building principals jumped from 40% to 75%; support for the community superintendent doubled from 29% to 58%. Support for the community school board itself increased from 31% to 57%. Even the central Board of Education shared in these more supportive attitudes, going from 24% approval to a 50% rating in a year.

> When asked to evaluate the schools in the district in comparison to the way they were before the creation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district, 72 per cent rated the schools better or about the same while only 17 per cent thought that they were worse and 10 per cent were not sure.[18]

Gittell concluded,

> More parents were in the schools more frequently and felt

more positively towards the locally selected professional staff and the local board. Informal visits to the schools were greater and knowledge of what was going on appeared to be more widespread. Certainly, parents felt school personnel were more responsive to them. Participant observations and interviews with staff suggested greater parent attendance and interest at meetings and more use of the schools as community facilities.[19]

Gittell's findings lend credence to an earlier speculation by Robert Lyke:

> It is likely that community control of the schools will quickly change the character of political interaction in ghetto communities. Citizens will no longer trace all problems in the schools to a repressive white society, hostility and tensions are likely to diminish as reforms are made, and future debate over education policy will be less likely to be as ideological as it currently is.[20]

The aggregate or community version of the participation hypothesis holds that as involvement increases so does supportiveness. In a moment we will turn to the evidence about relations between involvement and support for the financial aspects of schooling. However, we first need to consider an exception to the general relationship between increased involvement and increased support.

Two studies have found that as involvement increases, so does the tendency to be critical of the schools. Working with a national sample of 2,000 parents, Kent Jennings found that those parents who were PTA members had fewer grievances against the school than did parents who, in addition to being PTA members, also belonged to other education-related groups.[21] For members of any group, once a grievance has been expressed and pursued, there was a tendency to have another. The second study is that of Richard Cloward and James A. Jones. They found that the more a person was exposed to the schools, the more likely it was that that person would define education as either the first or second greatest problem in the community.

> These results would tend to suggest that school administrators must be prepared to deal with more negative attitudes toward the school if greater efforts are made to involve people in school activities. Such involvement . . . is functional for attitudes toward the importance of education generally, but as attitudes toward education improve the school as an institution is more likely to come under attack. Skillfully managed, however, these negative attitudes can become a source of pressure for better educational facilities and programs.[22]

That complaints increase as involvement increases will have the shrill ring of uncomfortable truth for many school principals. However, an important distinction must be made in both cases. Neither Jennings' "grievances" nor Cloward and Jones' "negative appraisals" are necessarily related to support. An individual may believe that cancer is an enormously important problem, and may be very critical about research to discover its cure, yet still support the attempt. That an individual thinks of the local schools as the community's most significant problem, may mean that the person thinks efforts at educational improvement should have the highest priority. The task, as Cloward and Jones remark, is to turn criticism to constructive purposes.

One way in which the prospects for constructive criticism can be increased is by providing a mechanism for authentic community involvement. Donald Haider points out that "representational devices tend to be important to a citizen's sense of efficacy and overall support for a political system. It is at the heart of the democratic process and should not be minimized."[23] Norman Luttbeg and Richard Griffin set out to see whether a lack of accurate representation by education officials of citizens had for the system. They had hypothesized that "the low salience of politics for the average man means that the lack of representation in no way affects the level of public support for the political system."[24] ***But instead they found that as misrepresentation or nonrepresentation increased, support decreased.*** Although the amount of the association was slight (about 10 per cent of the variance in public support was explained by misrepresentation) it was still significant.

Dollar support for the schools is critical. The extensive school-community communications studies conducted by Richard Carter and others at Stanford University,

> . . . began with the hypothesis (and implicit hope) that public understanding leads to support for public education. We found some evidence for this hypothesis. But we found it for the degree of understanding among informed observers in school districts, not among the citizens as a whole. From what we have seen of citizen participation, there is little to suggest that we would find support related to understanding among citizens generally.[25]

Carter's findings indicate that understanding is indeed related to support, but understanding itself is also related to and increased by participation in school affairs. Thus, involvement and understanding may be used to increase each other and the result in turn conduces to support, in this case willingness to financially support the schools. George Gallup traced the same relation in the opposite direction in his 1969 national survey of public attitudes toward the schools:

1. While the American people seem reasonably well informed about school activities, they are ill-informed about education itself.
2. Since they have little or no basis for judging the quality of education in their local schools, pressures are obviously absent for improving the quality.

   Thus, in the absence of more sophistication and information, they can hardly be expected to be stronger supporters of more money.[26]

The so-called "turnout" hypothesis suggest that school bond issues pass more easily when voting participation is in the light than in the intermediate range. In ***Voters and Their Schools***, Richard Carter and John Suttoff report that for more than a

thousand school districts over more than a decade, bond election experience indicated this:

> When the percentage of voters is less than 30 per cent, many more elections succeed than fail; when a moderate turnout of 30 to 60 per cent of the voters occurs, more elections fail than succeed; and when the turnout is over 60 per cent, the chances of success and failure are equal.[27]

Most school people have concentrated on the diminished chances of success in the portion of voter turnout from 30 to 60 per cent. The relationship exists because of the differences in attitudes which characterize successive strata of the electorate. In general, the stratum of frequent voters contains a higher proportion favorable to government action (in this case, additional money) than does the stratum of infrequent voters. A light voter turnout will be made up disproportionately of those who favor schooling expenditures (parents, school people, and their friends and neighbors). But as voter turnout increases, it moves into a stratum of voters which has a higher proportion of "anti" attitudes. Evidence is not unanimous on this relation,[28] but the conclusion frequently drawn is that success can be enhanced if voting can be depressed.

There are two difficulties with this conclusion. In the first place, it is ethically objectionable for public educators to rely for the schools' (short term) success on restricting the public's franchise. The second objection is a practical one. It is difficult to control voter turnout. When issues are important and opinions are strongly held, turnout may be heavy. Since in the most important issues that is exactly the case, it seems preferable for educators to work on the attitudes that characterize *all* strata of the electorate prior to the need for mobilizing support. A reservoir of informed voters is a more reliable resource in times of crisis than people who are intermittently called upon for only marginal participation.*

After one of the few longitudinal studies of school/community interaction, Robert Agger and Marshall Goldstein concluded that there was an ominous gap between professional educators and the less mobilized stratum of citizens. They found an

> . . . increasing tendency for the alienated to organize and be organized by what the dominant overstructure might term "demagogues." The increasingly effective leaders of the opposition are demagogues but not in the pejorative sense. They are men and women who represent the less articulate but substantial numbers of people whose potentially sympathetic support has increasingly been wasted by an elite which partly does not comprehend the existence of an alien cultural perspective, partly does not care, partly does not know how to cope with it, and partly fears both personal and professional self-searching and the kinds of professionally prohibited political involvement which might then have to follow.[30]

Agger and Goldstein object to the manipulative use of involvement, the practice of asking for community inputs only at the point of crisis, in only one direction (support for the status quo) and then only for something that has already been unilaterally determined. Russell Isbister and G. Robert Koopman make the case against this manipulative public relations model nicely:

> When citizen participation is looked on as a way to get out of a community conflict or to put over a bond issue, the very process is degraded. Emphasis should be placed on the essential nature of democracy—on the basic right of the interested citizen. Education, being a matter of great public concern, should be planned by all members of the community. Without participation in educational planning only the most common and traditional needs may be perceived and met.[31]

The so-called "participation hypothesis"—increased involvement leads to increased support by those involved—has been documented in several areas of private and public endeavor. Involvement is not without its limits or its drawbacks, but it remains a fundamental justification for decentralization.

Goal III: Educational Achievement

Educational achievement of students is a principal goal of public schools. Yet, student achievement is at the same time both a widely accepted and widely disliked measure of school performance. Still, the importance of student achievement, and its central place as a criterion for school performance, suggest that professional and lay people share a profound interest in it.

Historically, proponents of community involvement have argued that educational achievement could be increased through community participation. The statement of Carol Lopate, *et al.* is a good introduction to this area. Their 1969 review of the literature noted:

> When parents are involved in the decision-making process of education, their children are likely to do better in school. This increased achievement may be due to the lessening of distance between the goals of the home and the goals of the school and to the changes in teachers' attitudes resulting from their greater sense of accountability when the parents of the child are visible in the schools. It may also be related to the increased sense of control the child feels over his own destiny when he sees his parents actively engaged in decision-making in his school. Very important for this achievement is the heightened community integrity and ethnic group self-esteem which can be enhanced through parent and community groups affecting changes in educational policy and programs.[32]

At the historical high water mark for rhetorical support of the direct linkage between community involvement and achievement, Maurice Berube wrote:

> There is every reason to believe that community control of

*Finance is not the only critical area in which the public's supportiveness of the school's programs seems to turn on levels of public understanding. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, in an extensive national survey dealing with school desegregation, found " . . . a close relation between understanding the facts and more favorable response toward desegregation. The more people know, the less willing they are to restrict the Constitutional rights of Black children."[29]

city schools will enhance educational quality. *Equality of Educational Opportunity* discovered that the secret to learning lay with student attitudes. Attitudes toward self, of power to determine one's own future, influence academic achievement far more than factors of class size, teacher qualifications or condition of school plant. "Of all the variables measured in the survey, the attitudes of student interest in school, self-concept, and sense of environmental control show the greatest relation to achievement," James S. Coleman concluded. Furthermore a pupil's attitude—"*the extent to which an individual feels that he has some control over his destiny*"—was not only the most important of the various elements studied, but it "appears to have a stronger relationship to achievement than do all the 'school' factors together."[33]

Another prominent defender of community involvement, Marilyn Gittell, evaluated those aspects of New York's Intermediate School 201 and Two Bridges experiments in local control. Defending the positive impact of community involvement, she wrote:

> To a certain extent, the results of these educational experiments were reflected in the standardized testing. The hard data on I.S. 201 and Two Bridges shows that the school district was able to at least keep some children on reading level and in some cases in some schools there was marked improvement. Both I.S. 201 and Two Bridges reflected a stable standardized test achievement at a time when the city declined in reading acheivement primarily because of the teacher strike. Figures indicate that the two districts did not decline at a period of general decline.[34]

The national study of the effects of parent participation in Head Start programs conducted by Charles Mowry, found:

> There is a strong relationship between high participation by parents and better performance on intellective and task-oriented measures. The children of parents with extensive participation in both roles [as decision makers and as learners] produced better scores on verbal intelligence, academic achievement, self concept, behavioral rating in classroom and at home, and change ratings in both learning and activities.[35]

As Mowry recognizes, there are several problems with these findings, including the probability that parents of children who were already high acheivers prior to their Head Start exposure, self-selected those children (and themselves as decision-makers) into program participation.

There are other difficulties of interpreting the evidence which links the decisional involvement of parents to the educational achievement of students. A first and most important qualification concerns the difference between causation and association. Milbrey W. McLaughlin, for example, found that although "parental involvement of any kind is conspicuously absent in [Title I] programs which fail to meet their objectives, all that can be said with justification about this finding is that successful programs and parental participation covary together."[36]

While parents with middle class attributes participate more in school activities than do lower class parents, and middle class children perform at higher levels on standardized tests, this does not mean that the parents' participation in the school's activities causes the students' achievement. Increasing the involvement of lower class communities in education decisions will not of itself make up for the tremendous range of educational advantages not available to them or their children. And changing decision-making patterns will not by itself dramatically alter the school's performance. As Diane Ravitch has noted:

> It still remains true in New York City as elsewhere, that schools with middle-class children—whether white or black—record higher achievement scores than schools with lower-class children, no matter who controls the schools. And it is equally true that the problems of poverty—hunger, family instability, sickness, unemployment, and despair—cannot be solved by the schools alone. No amount of administrative experimentation seems to be able to change these facts.[37]

Averch's survey of the question of educational achievement and its causes found that:

> The current status of research in this area can be described by the following propositions:
>
> Proposition 1: Research has not identified a variant of the existing system that is consistently related to students' educational outcomes. . . .
>
> Proposition 3: Research tentatively suggests that improvement in student outcomes, cognitive and non-cognitive, may require sweeping changes in the organization, structure, and conduct of educational experience.[38]

We have now had several years' experience with levels of community involvement somewhat higher than those which previously characterized urban schooling. Although there have been some gains (which will be reviewed below), a breakthrough in student achievement has not been made. It is difficult and depressing to document something which has not happened. Robert Hess, *et al.* have provided a useful summary:

> A compelling line of argument . . . contended that early experience affects subsequent intellectual and educational growth and achievement, and that children who grow up in homes disadvantaged by racial discrimination and poverty have a deficit of the experiences presumably essential for academic achievement in the public schools . . . Therefore compensatory programs should involve parents and assist them in providing a more adequate educational environment for their young children. In view of our present knowledge about early experience in ghetto and low income homes, this view obviously is simplistic and in some aspects false.[39]

Citizen involvement with school decision-making is thus the same as parental involvement with children. The benefits of association between the last two sets of factors (parents and children) could not be translated into casually increased benefits

from the first two sets of factors (citizens and decision-makers). To make matters worse, community involvement tumbled into the implementation gap along with virtually every other programmatic reform of the sixties. Programs that began with grand hopes were watered down. Their implementation was hesitant, imperfect, very partial, poorly supported and fickle. In order to justify their claims on resources and in order to overcome resistance to change, proponents of social and political reform (and community involvement is one such reform) overstated their original case. The uneven results from those partial changes have now been interpreted by some as showing the foolhardy nature of having tried to change anything in the first place. This cycle is familiar to political scientists and historians. Furthermore, the community involvement movement was not the first to wrap its political goals (control, responsiveness, *etc.*) in educational clothes (student achievement). The irony is that school people who have been doing exactly that for years should be so adept at criticizing community involvement on their own grounds.

We should have known better than to expect very dramatic, quick or widespread results from the sorts of changes in community involvement which have been in place too short a time for their effects to be manifest. The problems are too complex to yield to mere management reform.

Serious attempts at improving urban schools may require quantum jumps in political and material resources. When effects do emerge, they may be faint and they will certainly be difficult to trace to involvement. They may not be adequately registered by standardized tests. *And finally—and perhaps most importantly—it seems certain that we will not get important changes in achievement associated with involvement until we have moved that involvement to a level of significance such as shared control.*

There are several implications which need to be drawn from this experience. The first is that community involvement in education remains an important strategy for the improvement of urban education: it should not be discarded simply because it turns out to be as complicated and subtle as other education change strategies.[40] The gains may be slow to arrive and modest when they come. The second implication is that the resources devoted to community involvement (time, energy, support, *etc.*) need to be increased significantly if significant gains are to be realized. Recall Averch's conclusion that improvement in student outcomes may require, not the sort of incremental change so far attempted but "sweeping changes in the organization, structure, and conduct of educational experience . . ."[41]

To this point, we have reviewed some of the original expectations about the linkage between community involvement and educational achievement. We have stated the subsequent disappointment, and we have outlined some of the more plausible explanations for that melancholy reality. Other benefits associated with community involvement may, by themselves, provide a sufficient rationale for its support, but the central role of student achievement is so important that it should not be abandoned. The following section identifies four paths through which involvement may affect achievement. It cites the existing evidence which supports these paths and speculates about needed additional research.

Path 1: *Parent Self-Efficacy*. Parents as citizens participate in educational decisions, become more knowledgeable and confident, and then encourage their children to higher levels of achievement.

Path 2: *Institutional/Child Congruence*. Parents and other citizens participate in educational decisions and in so doing, affect the school which becomes more responsive to the children who then perform better.

Path 3: *Community Support*. Parents and other citizens participate in educational decisions, become themselves more interested in the school, turn to the community to get more support for the school, which is then better able to help children to higher achievement levels.

Path 4: *Student Self-Efficacy*. In this pattern, the child notices parent's involvement in the school and is stimulated by that example to perform better.

These patterns are graphically represented below and then traced in more detail.

Path 1: Parent Self-Efficacy

This is the most thoroughly (but still insufficiently) documented path. It begins with the parent's involvement in decision-making which increases (A) the parent's knowledge and (B) self-confidence. Those increases are then translated into (C) increased and improved attention to the child who then (D) does better in school. First, we should consider the evidence on the effect of involvement on the parent and second, on the generalization of the parent's involvement to the child's achievement.

McLaughlin's review of Title I evaluations indicated that, "It is . . . typically reported that, as a result of increased parent participation, parents know more about the 'special' program in which their child is enrolled . . ."[42]

Gittell's evaluation of community school boards in New York City

> . . . indicated that the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of board members were developed in the new citizen boards. All the board members showed increased knowledge as a result of the participation and became more articulate about their views.

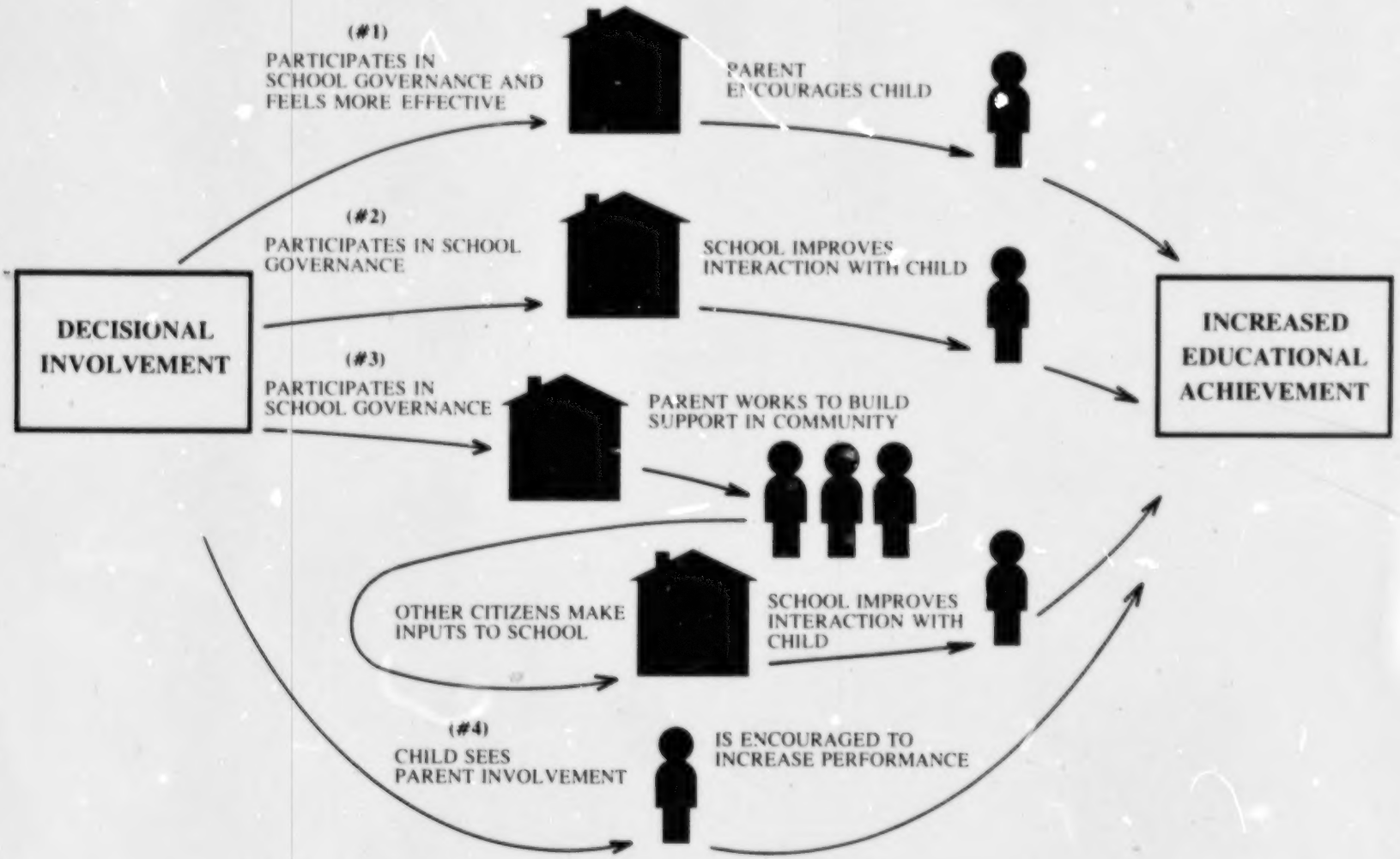
She continues:

> The net effect [the] developing sense of community . . . was to reduce the amount of alienation of parents towards the schools and to make them more aware of educational policy.[43]

Yin *et al.*, looked at the extent to which leadership skills had been developed as a result of citizen service on social welfare governing boards. Not only did significant numbers of people develop those skills as a result of their service, but also more

FIGURE 1:

PATHS OF INCREASED EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH DECISIONAL INVOLVEMENT



leadership skills were developed where the responsibility of the board was greatest.[44]

The sense of political efficacy measures the confidence which an individual feels that government will be responsive to his or her inputs. People who feel that their actions will be responded to are more likely than those who do not to take part in government activities. The act of participating itself encourages people to feel more efficacious. There is a circular relationship here between efficacy and participation and it works to decelerate involvement as well as to accelerate it. Hess' extensive review of the parental involvement literature reinforces the point in an educational setting: "There are indications that many Black mothers, and probably those of other ethnic minority groups, feel a sense of powerlessness regarding their ability to help their children achieve in school . . ."[45]

But can decisional participation help? Hess believes that although such participation is hardly a sufficient cause, membership in community organizations and the consequent increased feelings of control can contribute to educational achievement.[46]

He continues:

> Participation may have some impact on the development of competence and self-esteem in the parents involved (Miller, 1968; Scheinfeld, 1969; Hadger, 1970). It can be noted that these programs actively engage and involve parents in teaching their own children while emphasizing respect for their potential worth as individuals and confidence in this potential for continuous development.[47]

Mowry's study of parental participation in Head Start found that,

> Parents who were high in participation, especially those high in decision-making, were also high in feelings of ability to control their environment . . . Parents who were high in participation also viewed themselves as more successful, more skillful, and better able to influence their environment.[48]

McLaughlin makes a similar point:

> Parent training programs and a number of parent participation programs have accomplished what many Manpower Development Training Act programs have failed to do. They have given parents a sense of competence and confidence . . .[49]

That participation and the sense of personal efficacy reinforce each other is well established in educational governance and in other settings.[50] The sense of political efficacy is important in its own right but it also deserves to be cultivated for its contribution to other values. In the achievement context, the sense of efficacy is important because of its bearing on the parent's interaction with the child. If some parents feel powerless to help their children in school, then schools should work to overcome that.

Parents who build decisional skills through participating in the school, become more knowledgeable about education, gain specific information about the school's efforts with their children, and are better able (and more willing) to reinforce those efforts. Thus, there is a spillover from political to parental efficacy. McLaughlin cites a reanalysis of the Coleman data undertaken by Marshall Smith at the Center for Educational Policy Research which indicates that for

> . . . a representative sample of sixth grade students in the urban north . . . even when a large number of individual background characteristics such as SES and school-wide measures were controlled, the relation between [parental] PTA attendance and three measures of academic achievement were significant at the .05 level for black students.[51]

In her own excellent review, McLaughlin distinguished between programs of parent participation and parent training. Moving beyond participation to

> . . . parent training of even a modest sort . . . can be said to positively and significantly affect the cognitive development of children—both the target youngsters and the younger siblings. Of the two parent models, then, parent training appears to combine most successfully all the virtues of economy and attainment of cognitive and affective objectives for both parents and children.[52]

Stearns and Peterson make a similar point:

> The evidence indicates that involving parents as trainees and tutors can indeed improve children's performance—at least with young preschool children. [Several carefully controlled investigations] . . . have noted positive effects of such participation both on parents' attitudes about themselves and on children's IQ scores.[53]

And, Wilbur Brookover, et al., (1965) found that low achieving junior high school students whose parents had become involved in the school and made more aware of the developmental process of their children showed heightened self-concept and made significant academic progress.[54]

Adelaide Jablonsky asserts that compensatory programs in "schools which have open doors to parents and community members have greater success in educating children . . . The children seem to be the direct beneficiaries of the change in perception on the part of their parents".[55]

Joe L. Rempson states that,

> School-parent programs can help to increase the school achievement of the disadvantaged child. Both Schiff . . . and Duncan . . . discovered that children of low SES parents who participated in programs of planned contacts made significantly greater achievement gains in reading and in new mathematics, respectively, than comparably matched children of no or few contact parents.[56]

Carl Marburger has made the same point from the negative direction:

> Parents who are not involved, who do not know what is taking place in the school, can certainly not reinforce what the school is doing with their children.[57]

The evidence indicating that children of parents who are

actively involved in their education perform better than do other children hardly needs emphasis. The point here is that successful involvement in school decision-making can provide parents with the confidence and the knowledge to support a more active role at the more immediate family level.

Path 2: Institutional/Child Congruence

Responsiveness is the key to this second of the paths through which community participation may be linked to educational achievement. We had earlier hypothesized that in this path, parents and other citizens would be found to be participating in educational decisions, and that participation would affect the schools which might then become more responsive to the children who would in turn perform better. The studies reviewed in the earlier section dealing with the responsiveness goal clearly indicate that its achievement increases as community participation increases. Here we are concerned with evidence about the step beyond responsiveness, the congruence-achievement linkage.

One of the strongest supports for that is the so-called Pygmalion effect. Parents who express their confidence in their children's ability to their teachers have an effect on the teacher's subsequent view of those children. Rosenthal and Jacobson reported that children who profited from positive changes in teachers' expectations of their ability *all* had parents who had demonstrated some interest in their child's development and who were distinctly visible to the teachers.[58] Similarly, Rankin compared high and low achieving inner city children and found that the parents of the higher achieving group were better able to initiate contacts and pursue school-related matters with school officials.[59]

Most PTA's are weak forms of participation in governance, yet Coleman found that there was a significant relationship between the amount of community participation in the PTA and the achievement of students in 684 urban elementary schools. Where PTA attendance was reported as being high, children's performance was two to four months ahead of those schools which had no PTA. Christopher Jencks' reanalysis of the Coleman data indicated that

> PTA attendance was . . . significantly related to achievement. Race and class explained about 15 percent of the variance in schools' PTA attendance. But even after this was taken into account, schools whose principals reported that almost all parents attended PTA meetings scored between two and four months above schools whose principals reported not having a PTA. Schools with more moderate PTA attendance were strung out between. PTA attendance seems to be a proxy for district-wide parental interest in education. . . . [I]f the PTA was having an effect on achievement, it was an indirect effect on the attitudes of district staff, or other unmeasured factors, not a direct effect on measurable characteristics of the district. The relationship did hold for reading or math scores.[60]

Another of the analyses done of Head Start, the Kirschner report, concluded that significant institutional changes were identified more often at those sites where parental involvement was classified as high than at those sites with low involvement of parents. The difference was significant, and the researchers concluded that a relationship did seem to exist between the degree of parent involvement and the extent of Head Start impact on an institutional change.[61] Mowry's study of parental participation in Head Start investigated several types of institutional change including greater emphasis on the educational needs of poor people. "The number of reported changes was significantly greater in centers where parents were highly involved in decision-making and learning activities.[62]

The importance of such responsiveness can hardly be underestimated. As NYC's Bundy Commission said: "If peers and family regard the school as an alien, unresponsive, or ineffective institution in their midst, the child will enter the school in a mood of distrust, apprehension or hostility."[63] Hess's analysis of the premises underlying parent involvement policies indicates that the strategy was designed to overcome the "schools-as-failure" model (the school fails because it is not relevant to the child's need) and/or the "cultural differences" model (the majority group culture reflected in the school does not match the child's needs.). The strategies and models are all similar in that they require the school to facilitate the child's achievement by becoming more responsive to parental desires. McLaughlin's review of the lay participation aspects of Title I evaluations also documented the frequent finding of, "a change in teachers' attitudes about and understanding of low income children and their families."[64] The linkage between participation and responsiveness is clear, but although it is reasonable to presume that responsiveness may be being translated into achievement, it has yet to be empirically demonstrated.

Path 3: Community Support

In the first two patterns, educational achievement was effected through the actions of participants on the schools. In this pattern the focus of the participants' action is on other citizens. Participating in the school's affairs arms people with information and motivation which can be directed to other citizens. We have already reviewed the considerable stock of research which relates increases in participation to increases in support by primary participants. Evidence about the persistence of that effect as it ripples outward is more scanty. There, the greater supportiveness of primary participants should encourage them to recruit others in the community, and the resulting increased reservoir of positive attitudes should help the schools to facilitate the child's achievement. The path is long but there are some indications that at least part of it is being traversed. For example, with respect to parent training, a number of sources document the "vertical" and "horizontal" diffusion of benefits from such training. Not only does the trained parent perform better with the siblings of the child ("vertical" diffusion) but those skills also get communicated to other people in the community ("horizontal" diffusion).[65] If those "horizontal" or second-generation participants feel more efficacious, have more knowledge about the schools, and so on, then it is also quite

reasonable to assume that they will be more supportive of the school as an institution. Similarly, McLaughlin's review of Title I evaluations found that participants in program decisions led to increases in parent morale about the school.[66]

Path 4: Student Self-Efficacy

In some ways, this is the simplest and most direct of the paths. It suggests that the children observe their parents taking part in school decision-making and are therefore encouraged to think more highly of their own participation in school. The US Office of Education has made a succinct case for this pattern. "There is a subsidiary asset of parental involvement. As children see their own parents more involved in school affairs, they will be encouraged to take a more active interest in school."[67]

The logic underlying this path is apparent: if you believe that there is no way to succeed, you are unlikely to try. A sense of self-efficacy is as necessary a precondition for success with students as it is with their parents. The question is, can it be built through parental and community participation?

The experience of the Flint Michigan School and Home Program supports the possibility. The evaluation of the parent training aspects of that program indicate that the child's awareness of parents' participation stimulated the children to greater activity. The children in the group whose parents had the training experience showed gains on the Gates Revised Reading test which were double those of the control group of children.[68]

The best known study relevent to this question is the Coleman Report. Coleman measured three attitudes of students toward themselves:

> (1) Student's interest in school (2) self-concept specifically with regard to learning and success in school, and (3) sense of control of the environment. This analysis demonstrated that of all the variables measured (including family background and school variables) these attitudes showed the strongest relation to achievement at all three grade levels.[69] [Grades 6, 9, and 12].

Coleman's data indicate how important it is that students believe in themselves and in their ability to achieve. Parents can affect the child's attitudes toward school and toward their prospects for success in the school. In the first path discussed above, "Parent Self-Efficacy," parents are encouraged to take direct and purposeful action with their children. The pattern described now, "Student Self-Efficacy," does not involve purposeful communication from parent to child; rather the parent's actions are an example which the child notices. The key attitude may be what Coleman called "The sense of control of the environment," the school's administrators, teachers, decision producers, governance roles, etc. Students who perceive that their parents are effective in that environment are more likely to believe that they too, can successfully negotiate it. In addition, they are more likely to perceive their school environment as one that is supportive of them.

Mario Fantini has suggested an analogy between community involvement in urban schools and the control of Catholic schools. Andrew Greeley and Peter Rossi speculated that students in Catholic schools performed well academically at least in part because of the sense of security those schools generated. Similarly, Fantini says:

> Under community-directed schools, the educational environment is far less likely to be hostile or intimidating to the minority child. He will thus have a sense of being able to function in the school environment and, in turn, a greater sense of internal control—the prime prerequisite to effective learning, according to a growing body of educational evidence as well as psychological insight.[70]

In research which would support Fantini's speculation, Joan Abramis has documented the extent to which school principals' ideology of pupil control covaries with their attitude toward decentralization. Those who support decentralization are much more likely to employ more humanistic, child-centered, and pedagogically effective methods with children.

The linkage between the general concept, "sense of fate control" and educational achievement have been criticized by Judith Kleinfeld on three grounds.[72] First, Kleinfeld points out that "fate control" in the context of community control has overtones of racial self-determination and aspects of racial and ethnic pride and self-esteem. Coleman's measure of fate control did not refer to the community's self determination but rather to whether or not the student felt his or her own academic achievement was controlled by others or by self. Kleinfeld then attacks the validity of Coleman's fate control idea by demonstrating its ambiguity and by suggesting that the items on which it was based are susceptible to other measurement errors. Kleinfeld's own research (with 166 black eleventh and twelfth grade students in Washington, D.C. public schools) shows that those students who believe their fates to be externally controlled do not achieve less in school than those who feel themselves to be in more personnal control. Second, Kleinfeld's factor analysis of the Coleman data indicates that student attitudes toward academic achievement and not student attitudes toward fate control are related to their measured achievement levels. If Kleinfeld is correct the question becomes whether or not increases in control by the community (or more specifically, decisional involvement by parents) can contribute to students' sense of their own fate control and through that to their estimate of their own academic ability. Kleinfeld is pessimistic.

> . . . It is hard to see how redistributing power from external forces to the black community would affect black students' estimates of their academic ability.[73]

However, just before that statement, Kleinfeld notes,

> Community control of the schools might well increase black students self-esteem and racial pride, and this increased sense of self-worth may increase achievement . . .[74]

A more encouraging conclusion would revolve around such factors as the availability of role models, and an identification (and cooperation) with officials presumed to be less discriminatory and more sympathetic.

In another look at fate control, Marcia Guttentag administered the Coleman instrument to black fifth graders in New York's Intermediate School 201 where community involvement has been intense, prolonged, and visible. Coleman had found that poor children and those who attended ghetto schools had a low estimate of the prospects for their own successes. Moreover, they believed (perhaps realistically) that people were against them and that good luck would play a major role in determining their success or failure. Guttentag indicates that,

> Perhaps the most striking finding in this fifth grade group is the percentages of yes (19%) and no (79%) to the first question: "Everytime I try to get ahead something or somebody stops me." Typically, ghetto children overwhelmingly answer "yes" to this question. These I.S. 201 fifth graders had answered overwhelmingly "no." Particularly the boys feel that they are not being stopped in their attempt to get ahead. Answers to this attitude item are directly related to later academic achievement. This data is markedly different from the Coleman finding . . . It seems reasonable to suppose that the new atmosphere induced by community control of schools was related to this dramatic difference in attitude. It should also be noted that this was one item which explained much of the variance in later acheivement test scores for black children in the Coleman report. This difference in attitude is therefore likely to be related to later changes in achievement.[75]

Early proponents hoped that involvement would simply, directly, and dramatically increase achievement levels. While there is reason to believe that pupil achievement can be affected by parental (and other) involvement, the relationship is more subtle and the paths linking the two are more tortuous than was originally suspected. Evidence about the second route, "institutional/child congruence" is fairly well developed but stops short of the demonstrated impact on achievement. The third path, community support, still lacks a conclusively demonstrated link between the participation of the individual and subsequent proselytizing of the school's cause among the individual's peers. Although the proposition that involvement leads to support among those so involved is very well documented (See Goal II "Support" above) it has yet to be demonstrated that the school's supporters do what we may reasonably expect them to do—i.e., recruit other supporters.

There is a similar problem with the student self-efficacy pattern. Self-efficacy is associated with achievement, and it seems reasonable to believe that parental self-efficacy (generated or at least enhanced through decisional involvement) can percolate to the children of the involved parents, yet evidence is not yet conclusive. Thus, the state of our research-based knowledge concerning the individual patterns through which decisional involvement leads to increased achievement must be described as promising but uneven.

Although the beneficial impact of involvement on achievement has yet to be conclusively demonstrated for any of the paths, there is some evidence supporting each of them. In the real world, as well as in the world of research, the community's involvement travels all four of the paths. To the extent that there is an effect, it is a cumulative one.

Goal IV: Democratic Principles

One of the root norms of a democratic society is that those people whose lives are affected by a public institution should participate in the control of that institution. Schools affect important aspects of the social and material well-being that their students will enjoy. Schools are directly relevant to the ambitions which parents have for their children, and they are major public agencies in terms of taxes spent and social functions performed. At the neighborhood level these effects suggest that there should be neighborhood participation in school decision making. In fact, this basic democratic principle is so strong that even if involvement could not be expected to affect educational achievement, the congruence between the child and the institution, and support for schooling, it would still be justified on the democratic principle alone. Melvin Mogulof, whose wide practical and academic experience with citizen participation in social welfare matters makes him a well-qualified observer, has pointed to democratic principle as an intrinsic and sufficient justification for community involvement:

> It is not that citizen participation helps us to get any place faster; although it may in fact do all the good things that have been claimed for it (e.g., decrease alienation, create a program constituency, calm would-be rioters, etc.). Rather we base the case for a broadly conceived Federal citizen participation policy on the argument that participation represents an unfulfilled goal in and of itself. It fits us well as a society. It is what the American experiment is all about. And perhaps in the process of giving aggrieved groups influence over their resources and communal decision *because it is right* we will increase the life chances for all of us.[76]

One problem is that decisions about many aspects of the schooling enterprise are facilitated by expert knowledge. That knowledge is not very widely spread among the general population. Those who possess it have used it to control schooling for outcomes in which they believe. But where major segments of the community disagree with the values and actions of the experts, it is necessary for the community to assert its own interests on its own behalf. The problem of lay involvement in areas that are at least in part technical is a persistent one.[77]

Yet, as John Dewey wrote almost fifty years ago:

> No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interest of the few. And the enlightenment must proceed in ways which force the administrative specialists to take account of the needs. The world has suffered more from leaders and authorities than from the masses. The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion.[78]

The political process is a carrier for debate, discussion, and per-

suasion. The problem which Dewey posed for the public remains with us. How can community involvement in school decision-making be organized? The halting movements toward decentralization have been one such attempt. But few persons (even academics) are still so innocent as to believe that reason-presented-by-writing will very dramatically affect other people's behavior. School decentralization was and is a political movement. It set out to alter both the control structure and the values served by schools. As an aggregate process, politics is how the society summarizes the clash of individual interests in temporarily "final" statements of its overall values. Teachers and administrators have the same right as community members to pursue their inevitably partial interests in school policy. The force and scope of unionization is one indication of how effectively professionals now exercise that right. But too many school people still draw a line at the community's involvement in decision-making. Involvement, they say, is "politics". As it is commonly (and perjoratively) used, the word "*politics*" conjures visions of buying and selling influence, making dirty and secret deals, and compromising away moral gains. For many professionals, politics has an even less attractive personal meaning since they see themselves as the target of unwanted political pressures. Politics is the force that would have them favor someone's nephew for a teaching job, or it is the power that hamstrings their professional prerogatives and gives them to another group. It can be the selfish motivation that causes an ambitious citizen to turn a critical spotlight on the administrator's school. These are all indeed aspects of politics, but they are not the total —or even the most important—part of politics. For example, the unsavory motives that compelled a President to disgrace the office are part of politics, but so are the moral indignation and competing purposes that forced him out. The privately negotiated understandings among the voting members of a school board are part of politics, but so is the keenly felt responsibility to constituents beyond which some board members will not go. The rivalry and duplication among offices with overlapping missions leads to "office politics" in a bad sense, but the competition among them can also produce political responsiveness desired by all.

Like other political systems, schools have to cope with the human characteristics that are so easy to disdain (ambition, parochiality, ill will, misunderstanding, and so on). *The job of public educational policy then is to arrange intensely human and individual characteristics so that they aggregate to a more inclusive interest.* The public strife and conflict that put the ugly part of politics on such prominent display is part of this process. Adopting a political interpretation means moving past a merely cynical reaction to people's failings to see in those shortcomings how the public's interest is, or can be served. Educators, and especially educational administrators, who do not go beyond their cynical rejection of "politics" cannot engage the realistic tasks of the public's schools. They cannot cope with the shortcomings of the persons in their organizations and their community environments so that the public's interest is served. They are not playing their vital role as leaders—both educationally and politically.

If the recent history of decentralization is viewed in this broader—more political—context, then no one should be surprised that school people have been reluctant to embrace a political interpretation of their responsibilities. To the obscure and difficult task of schooling has been added one that is even more difficult—politics. To the central social task of educating children has been added the task of doing that with and through the society's political process. That is an outrageous but appropriate expectation which is far beyond the capacity of most professional educators, most communities, amd most of the control structures which now mediate their interaction. But if urban schools are to achieve what they must, then we must all learn and practice a better politics of education.

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